



**GRANT RECIPIENT**  
PORTER COUNTY  
CONVENTION, REC. AND  
VISITOR COMMISSION

**YEAR**  
2009

**COUNTY**  
PORTER

**CATEGORY**  
PLANNING/COORDINATION/  
MANAGEMENT

**GRANT AWARD**  
\$75,000

**LOCAL SHARE**  
\$75,000



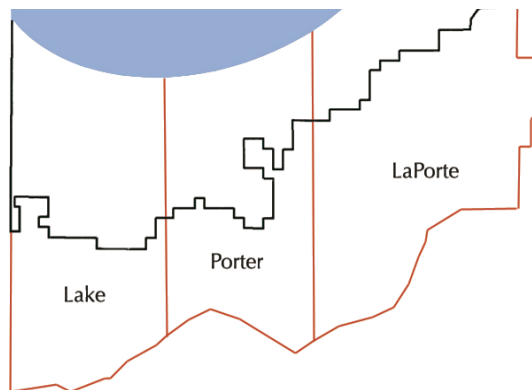
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## Beyond the Beach – Discovery Trail

The dunes coupled with the unique topography of Porter County creates an ecological wonder with many positive assets. The discovery trail is the first product development project that threads communities together in Northwest Indiana. Unfortunately, the packaging of these assets into a compelling experience for visitors is a difficult endeavor. The goal of the discovery trail was to utilize current assets, and link them together via themes that are shown on thematic maps.

The Indiana Dunes are the destination driver for Porter County by attracting nearly three million visitors annually. Just as the dunes are a major strength, they are also a weakness, because the average length of stay is two to six hours. A visitor can enjoy the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (IDNL) or Indiana Dunes State Park (IDSP) for several hours, and leave Porter County without spending any money within the region. The solution to this challenge was to create a Discovery Trail that will motivate these visitors to stay longer by managing the flow of the visitors to the Indiana Dunes. This will help Porter County economically, but it will have huge benefits for both the IDSP and IDNL, because it can help protect the dunes. The National Park Service (NPS) recognizes that visitors to the dunes are not getting the full experience by only staying a few hours, and by spending the majority of their time at the beaches. The NPS determined that it would take two days to get the full experience of the dunes and its regional ecology. The discovery trail helps the NPS to meet this goal, but it goes further, because it exposes visitors to the wonderful ecological assets ,among other things, throughout the county.



**RESULT:** A discovery trail that helps the public access ecological treasures in Northwest Indiana.